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BULLETIN OF THE WISCONSIN STATE
BOARD OF INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION

NO. 2

Wisconsin Legislation Governing Industrial and Continuation Education

BY

H. E. MILES, President
of the
Wisconsin State Board of Industrial Education

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Wisconsin's New Laws on Industrial Education

H. E. Miles, Racine, Wisconsin.

President, Wisconsin State Board of Industrial Education.

With much wisdom and foresight the Wisconsin Legislature of 1908 named a very able Commission to study the question of Industrial Education at home and abroad, and lay before the next Legislature, that of 1910, its findings and recommendations. The report of this Commission is regarded as the most intelligent expression upon the subject so far made in this country. Copies may be had upon request to The Legislative Reference Library, Madison, Wisconsin. The Wisconsin laws, then, were not hastily devised nor passed. They are based upon two years of exhaustive study by very able men, and upon the experience of all the countries of the world whose experience is of value.

Child Labor and Truancy Laws

"Wisconsin began at the beginning by rewriting her child labor and truancy laws. By those laws she has taken complete control educationally, so to speak, of the time of the child from its seventh to its sixteenth year. She has provided that no child under sixteen shall work at any occupation hazardous to body, health, or character."

The requirements are very exact with reference alike to parents, employers, and officers of the law. The employers of minors of any age should read carefully the Child Labor Law, Chapter 479, to be had upon application to the Industrial Commission at Madison. The very necessity now of the exercise of considerable care, and the observance of various regulations in the employment of a minor should be of mutual advantage to employee and employer in making the employment, once entered upon, more steady and continuous, more seriously regarded and appreciated. The laws are not paternalistic, and yet they do make it certain that the youth

of Wisconsin shall, so far as the state can provide, be healthy, intelligent, of good morals, and shall grow up into efficient, capable men and women, worthy in all respects of their citizenship.

Every normal child is required to attend regularly the public school, or other equivalent school, from the seventh to the fourteenth year. Between fourteen and sixteen years of age there is an alternative; every child shall continue to attend the common school faithfully or, upon obtaining a definite permit from the Commissioner of Labor, a truancy officer, or the judge of a State, county, or municipal court, the child may enter upon a definitely specified useful occupation, working thereat not more than 48 hours per week, including five hours per week to be spent in the Industrial School. If he discontinues the permitted occupation at any time he must return at once to the public school and the employer must return the permit for cancellation. There is some feeling that this maximum limit should be 48 hours per week exclusive of the 5 hours spent in school, or 53 hours in all. Very successful adjustments have, however, been worked out in some cases.

Every child in Wisconsin between fourteen and sixteen years of age, who, under a special permit enters upon some useful employment, must go to an Industrial, Commercial, Continuation, or Evening School for five hours each week, the employer continuing the wages during those hours, the attendance upon school being for such hours, and at such places, as the local Board of Education prescribes. The character of the local Board is an assurance to all that the hours will be made as convenient as circumstances permit. It is not, however, expected that these children will work hard all day, and then when fagged out be sent to school for further strain and wearisome effort. It is interesting to note in this connection the experience of the New York Central Railroad in its apprenticeship schools. The apprentices "ring in" at those schools at seven o'clock in the morning two mornings in the week, leaving for their shop work at nine o'clock. The school thus gets the boy when he is freshest and best able to receive instruction and profit by it. The Company's superintendent declares that the best return for the wages paid these apprentices comes from the hours spent in these schools, so greatly is the efficiency and general usefulness of the apprentices increased by this instruction. He says that boys who have gotten well along in the school courses can take a new shop machine, and in a week's time produce three-

quarters as much as the average skilled man, while boys who have not had this school instruction will often require a month's time on a new machine to produce one-half as much as the average mechanic, and the waste in material, etc., is, of course, correspondingly greater. Other employers make similar statements.

It may, therefore, be said that Wisconsin has compulsory education up to sixteen years of age, in the common school up to fourteen years, and from fourteen to sixteen either in the common school or the industrial school. There is no escape except for children engaged in agriculture, who are exempted from the provisions, presumably under the assumption that the farm is in a way a school.

Truancy

The provisions against truancy are fairly complete, and a growing public sentiment may be expected to support their enforcement.

The new Truancy Law (Section 439a, etc., published by the Industrial Commission, Madison) by specific provisions, requires all truancy officers, and others in interest, to see to it that every child up to sixteen years of age shall attend the common school, or an equivalent parochial or private school until he has graduated from the elementary school and can furnish proper certificate to that effect, "or, if over fourteen and under sixteen years of age, to attend school, or become regularly employed at home or elsewhere," under permit as before mentioned, and with five hours per week in the industrial school.

The lax truancy laws of the various States result in great numbers of children absenting themselves from school without adequate cause. A great majority of those who so absent themselves might as well as not remain in school.

An investigation by a Massachusetts Commission into the condition of 3700 families whose children were absenting themselves from school, disclosed the surprising fact that 76 per cent of them might better than not continue in school. Their services were not needed by their families. They were out of school only because the parents were tired of insisting upon further attendance, and because the work of the school was distasteful.

It is not enough to compel children to attend school until sixteen years of age. Many children under such legal compulsion, and with the courses of study as heretofore, will hate school, will

loiter and shirk in school, acquire an extreme distaste for work, and be more injured than helped. The new industrial education, by making work in the seventh and eighth grades more practical, will keep great numbers of these children in school of their own accord, and will make them like school sometimes as well as they like their games. Many a big rough boy despises the drawing lesson that requires him to picture a rose. He will be absorbed with interest when the drawing lesson enables him to make a working draft of a house or an automobile.

Illiteracy

Wisconsin is apparently determined to do away with illiteracy, Section 1728a–11 requiring that no person shall employ a minor over fourteen years of age in a community where there is an Industrial School for the industry in which the minor works without first securing a written permit from "the commissioner of labor, state factory inspector, or any assistant factory inspector, or from the judge of a juvenile court where such child resides, authorizing the employment of the minor as provided in Section 1728b of the statutes, and certifying either to his ability to read at sight, and write legibly simple sentences in the English language, or that he is a regular attendant at the public evening school or continuation school." This provision operates only against illiteracy, as attendance upon industrial schools in other cases is not compulsory after the age of sixteen.

Taking the country as a whole, it is humiliating to note that its percentage of illiteracy is fifty times greater than that of Germany, Norway, Sweden, or Denmark, there being 107 illiterates per 1000 persons in the United States and only 2 per 1000 in the latter countries. In New York state one voter in eighteen is illiterate. In the German army only one volunteer in 2500 is illiterate, and in the German navy only one in 10,000. Nor is this condition chargeable to immigration, for among the children of immigrants there are only 9 illiterates per 1000, while there are 44 per 1000 among the native white children of native parents. It is found, too, that in opening classes in shop mechanics, with apparently skilled and educated mechanics, the teacher must often begin with lessons in addition and subtraction.

The State Board

"With her child labor and truancy laws thus rewritten, Wisconsin proceeded to pass her laws on industrial education. First,

she established a State Board of Industrial Education, consisting of three employers, three employees, and three practical and eminent educators—being the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Dean of the University Extension Division, and the Dean of the College of Engineering. The whole law, as before stated, is based upon the findings of a commission of especially capable men, and puts Wisconsin abreast of the foremost industrial nations of the world, not borrowing their systems, but adapting and Americanizing them."

As two-thirds of the State Board of Industrial Education, and two-thirds of the local boards of industrial education consist of employers and employees, a great demand is thereby made upon the intelligence and patriotism of employers and employees throughout the state. Never before, possibly, have such demands been made upon these classes for the betterment of their own interests, nor such opportunities given them. In every community it is now necessary that employers and employees give diligent and especial consideration to the development of the local school that it may particularly and exactly meet the requirements of the community, and shall differ from schools in other communities in so far as the communities' industries and needs differ from those of other communities. There is not an industry in the state but its people are called upon to see to it that the local school adapt itself, so far as it reasonably may, to the interests of those engaged in that industry to the end that the industry and the community may be made more and more efficient and serviceable.

It is well here to quote from the law, words which nobly set forth its purpose, equally with reference to Stout Institute where teachers will be instructed, and to the schools in general throughout the state, "to instruct young persons in industrial arts and occupations * * * and to give such instruction as will lead to *a fair knowledge of the liberal arts*, a *just and seemly appreciation* of the *nobility and dignity of labor*, and in general *to promote diligence, economy, efficiency, honor, and good citizenship.*"

It is recognized that the teachers must be very differently trained from those in the present schools and that the making of teachers is of immediate and prime importance.

Next, the State appropriates toward the maintenance of industrial schools throughout the State now being established, a sum in each case equal to one-half of the amount expended in any school up to $3000, and not exceeding $10,000 for any one community,

providing it is shown to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction that a school seeking state aid has been maintained in a satisfactory manner for not less than eight months during the year ending the 30th of the preceding June.

Local Boards and Schools

The law requires that there be established in every community of five thousand inhabitants or more (and there may be established in smaller communities) a local board of industrial education, consisting of two employers, two employees, and the city superintendent. It is mandatory upon the local Board to establish, foster, and maintain industrial, commercial, continuation, and evening schools. The existing school buildings and equipment shall be used as far as practicable.

The local board is required to report before the first day of September each year to the local taxing power the amount of money needed to support these schools and this sum "*shall be levied* as other taxes are levied," and "shall be equal to the amount of money so required by said local board," not exceeding one-half mill, and these moneys shall be set aside for and expended by the local board.

Courses of Study

The courses of study shall be approved by the state superintendent and the state board and, in addition to the industrial courses, "shall include English, citizenship, sanitation," etc., to the end that the industrial workers shall be, not only skilled mechanics, but good citizens, and shall know what are their rights and obligations with respect to themselves and their fellows, and how best to secure and observe those rights and obligations.

Cost of Materials

Students "may be required to pay for materials consumed by them in their work," or the school board may establish "a fixed sum to be paid by each student in each course" to cover the cost of material; and articles manufactured "shall be disposed of at their market value at the discretion of the school board, and the proceeds shall be paid to the local treasurer for the fund of the local board of industrial education."

Apprenticeship

Wisconsin has likewise rewritten her apprenticeship laws. The former law was written in 1849 and under present industrial conditions was obsolete. It becomes a punishable offense to form "any contractual relation in the nature of an apprenticeship" without complying with this new law. The law requires that all apprenticeship agreements shall be signed by the legal representative of the minor and by the employer. The agreement shall state the number of hours to be spent in work and the number of hours to be spent in instruction; the total of such hours shall not exceed fifty-five in any one week.

The agreement must provide that *the whole trade*, as carried on by the employer, *shall be taught*, and shall state the amount of time to be spent at each process machine; also that not less than five hours per week of the before mentioned fifty-five hours per week shall be devoted to instruction, including instruction in English, in citizenship, business practice, physiology, and such other branches as may be approved by the State Board of Industrial Education. It shall name the amount of compensation to be paid the apprentice.

The instruction may be given in a public school, or in such other manner as may be approved by the State Board of Industrial Education. Failure to attend school subjects the apprentice to a loss of compensation "for three hours for every hour such apprentice shall be absent without good cause." It is not required that the apprentice attend school during such parts of the year as the public school is not in session.

While the requirements of the law are specific, they meet the favor of many of the largest employers in Wisconsin, and there is reason to believe that the apprenticeship system, as now provided, will develop very materially in ways advantageous to employer and employee. The apprentice is assured of steady employment, and of such instruction as will make him a thoroughly capable man and wage earner up to the limit of his abilities, while the employer will be assured of the continued service of this sort of employee. Some of the large manufacturers have very cordially brought their apprenticeship system under the new law, and will either have apprenticeship schools in their own shops, as is done in many places successfully, or will give their apprentices the use of the public Industrial Schools in their communities. As else-

where stated, experience shows that the wages paid for the hours in school bring the best money returns of any.

In thus providing for the education in the vocations, and in citizenship of that half of our population that lives by manufacturing and commerce, Wisconsin is doing, and the other states will do, only what for years they have been doing for the other half that lives by agriculture.

Agricultural Education

Great expenditures for many years and wise direction of agricultural education have marvelously improved and made more scientific our industrial army of agricultural workers, and has made our farmers the happiest, and in many respects, the best informed, and most reliable of American workers. Not only are many millions spent for the instruction of old and young in that industry, but other millions ($4,000,000 by the Federal Department of Agriculture alone) are annually expended, in direct promotion work, in the study of soils, pests, new crops, etc., to the infinite betterment of agriculture. It is not long ago that the annual product of the soil, valued at three billions of dollars, was looked upon with amazement. That product now equals nine billions of dollars, the increase largely due to agricultural investigation and training. The more spent, the greater has been the percentage of return. Indeed this outlay is not an expenditure; it is an investment.

And now the state is to render similar service to its neglected commercial and manufacturing population, assistance that is given in European countries as readily and as effectively as is here given to the farmers.

Wisconsin has laid her foundations broad and deep. In criticism it may be said that these laws, however splendid, do not constitute an educational system. They offer only the opportunity and the requirements; the great, living, pulsating, efficient school is yet to be created; that will require infinite judgment, painstaking application and adjustment. Earnest men, not unmindful of their shortcomings, are applying themselves to the task. They will need and require the assistance and support of all good people, and are relying upon it.

The first school under the Wisconsin plan was opened in Racine. At the end of the first week, with only a general notice as an invitation, three hundred eager students were at work in the evening school, the building was crowded and two to four hundred students

were yet to be provided for. A canvass of Appleton shows five-hundred students ready for the work. The prospect in Oshkosh is particularly attractive. Its splendid new Industrial School building will be equipped and in operation within a few weeks. Manitowoc has 200 students in her new industrial classes. Other cities are responding similarly, and it may confidently be anticipated that Wisconsin soon will feel the influence of her industrial schools in a remarkable degree. Those who are most interested and informed throughout the United States express the highest approval of the Wisconsin system, and are watching it with interest.